

OFFICE OF POLICY AND LEGAL ANALYSIS

Date: March 13, 2021

To: Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Commerce

From: Samuel Senft, Legislative Analyst

LD 277 “An Act To Discontinue the Use of the SAT in Maine Schools” (Brennan)

SUMMARY

This bill prohibits the Commissioner of Education from including the use of the SAT as a method for assessing student performance in the state assessment program. It also directs the Department of Education to develop an alternate method of assessment to replace the SAT.

TESTIMONY

Proponents:

- Maine was the first state in the nation to use the SAT to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind.
- The SAT, even when used solely for purposes of college entrance, has been criticized as inherently biased based on race, gender and family income. Tends to overestimate achievement for men and underestimate for women,
- The SAT is a poor predictor of college performance and of content mastery.
- Last October, DOE discontinued its contract to use to SAT as a means of assessment; DOE is seeking alternative means
- More and more colleges are discontinuing use of the SAT in evaluating applicants.
- The SAT was not intended to measure curriculum mastery.
- Maine should continue to fund the cost of the SAT for those students who want to take the test

Opponents:

- Maine was the first state to adopt the SAT as its statewide assessment to meet federal accountability requirements in 2006. Other states followed.
- There is also a growing consensus among researchers that offering the SAT at no cost during the school day helps students into college.
- The SAT connects students to distinct opportunities and benefits like free, personalized practice on Khan Academy and college application fee waivers.

Neither For Nor Against

- An increasing number of colleges are not using the SAT.
- UMaine ceased using the SAT to evaluate applicants to all schools and programs in 2020. The test is optional but even if scores are submitted they are usually not considered. The school is reinforcing this message with admissions.
- UMaine looks for demonstrated performance over time, extracurriculars, community involvement, core course performance, and rigor of courses.
- There is some concern that if the SAT is optional for college entrance, the balance could tip in favor of those who do submit scores
- NWEA and Accuplacer are alternatives
- There is some concern that if the SAT is not offered for the purposes of content mastery evaluation, an equity issue could be created because some kids may have difficulty acceding the

SAT.

- The SAT was never intended to be used as a general measure of academic performance for the purposes of school and district accountability
- There is the potential for a significant number of learners to no longer be able to access the SAT, which is still an essential piece of college admittance
- There is a lot of frustration among educators with how often assessments change

INFORMATION REQUESTS:

- 1) *It was asked if the SAT been entirely discontinued for the purposes of assessing student performance (v. for college entry).*

See attached response from DOE.

- 2) *It was asked if DOE has identified an alternative measure of assessment?*

See attached response from DOE.

- 3) *Information was requested regarding college and university use of the SAT, whether colleges and universities that have a “SAT optional” policies favored students who did submit SAT scores. Similar information was requested as regards the ACT.*

Please see the included spreadsheet for information related to New England colleges and universities. 48 New England colleges and universities (mostly four year schools) were reviewed. Nearly all (with the sole exception of the US Coast Guard Academy) had adopted a temporary or permanent “test optional” or, much less commonly, “test free policy.” Of these, 23 of the policies were temporary and made in responses to challenges presented by the COVID pandemic. Some school indicated that their test optional policy might be extended permanently.

Many test-optional” schools specifically stated on their websites that students not submitting scores would not be disadvantaged in admissions. However, data as regards whether or not submission of scores actually impacted admission was not available.

Please note that the initial source of information is Compass Education Group¹, a test prep company. Information was also gathered from individual school admissions websites.

- 4) *Information was requested regarding subject matter SAT tests.*

Please see the spreadsheet for information regarding SAT subject tests. Most schools that addressed these tests in their admissions material did not require them.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Maine began using the SAT as an accountability assessment for high school juniors in 2006.

¹ Sawyer, Art. *SAT and ACT Policies and Score Ranges for Popular Colleges and Universities*. Compass Education Group (February 16, 2021). Available online at: <https://www.compassprep.com/college-profiles/>
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- Current statute: [20-A MRSA §6202](#)

§6202. State assessment program established; content

The commissioner shall establish a statewide assessment program to measure and evaluate on a continuing basis the academic achievements of students in grades 3 to 12 on the accountability standards set forth in [section 6209](#) and in department rules implementing that section and other curricular requirements. The commissioner may elect to provide for the use of alternative measures of student achievement in grades 9 to 12. This assessment applies to students in the public elementary and secondary schools, in public charter schools, as that term is defined in [section 2401, subsection 9](#), and in all private schools approved for tuition whose school enrollments include at least 60% publicly funded students, as determined by the previous school year's October and April average enrollment. The assessment program must be adapted to meet the needs of children with disabilities as defined in [section 7001, subsection 1-A](#) or other students as defined under rules by the commissioner.

- The MEA submitted a link to an article in Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis², which found that Maine’s adoption of the SAT as a means of assessment increased overall college attendance by Maine students by 2-3 percentage points. The article can be found [here](#).
- Educate Maine published a report entitled “The Maine School Testing Debate” in 2020. That report can be found [here](#).³
- The Education Commission of the States published a 2019 “response to information request” regarding states that use the SAT or ACT to meet federal testing requirements. The results are published [here](#).⁴
 - The survey found that the following states used **ACT for federal testing accountability**: Alabama, Montana, Oklahoma and Wyoming
 - The survey found that the following states offered **ACT in addition** to other state assessment tests: Arizona, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah and Wisconsin
 - The survey found that the following states used **SAT for federal testing accountability**: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, DC, Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and West Virginia
 - The survey found that the following states offered **SAT in addition** to other state assessment tests: Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, Ohio and Tennessee
- The Education Commission of the States published a 2018 “response to information request” regarding state requirements that students take a standardized assessment test such as the SAT or ACT. The results are published [here](#).⁵

² Huritz, Michael et. al. *The Maine Question: How Is 4-Year College Enrollment Affected by Mandatory College Entrance Exams?* Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (March 1, 2015). Available online at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.3102/0162373714521866>

³ Educate Maine. The Maine School Testing Debate. (2020). Available online at: https://www.educatemaine.org/docs/Assessment-Brief_Final.pdf.

⁴ Woods, Julie. Education Commission of the States. *Response to Information Request*. March 4, 2019. Available online at: <https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Info-Request-ACT-SAT-High-School-Assessments.pdf>

- The survey found that all 11th grade students in the following states were **required to take the SAT**: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Michigan New Hampshire, Rhode Island and West Virginia.
 - The survey found that all 11th grade students in the following states were **required to take the ACT**: Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin and Wyoming.
 - The following states give districts the **choice** between the SAT or ACT: Ohio, Oklahoma and Tennessee. The SAT or ACT is offered as an option to students in the following states, but is not required: DC (SAT), Hawaii (ACT), Minnesota (both), South Carolina (both).
- The Education Commission of the States published a 2018 “response to information request” regarding state laws that allows 11th graders in public schools to take the SAT free of charge. The results are published [here](#).⁶
 - The survey found that in the 2017-201 academic year, nine states offered the SAT to all public school juniors free of charge: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire and West Virginia.
 - In 2018, the Education Commission of the States published a 50 State review of school assessments, found [here](#).⁷
 - In 2018, Florida published the results of a comprehensive review on use of the ACT or SAT for statewide assessment purposes⁸. The overall conclusion of the report was that districts should not be given the choice of the SAT, ACT or an alternative test, as results would not be comparable across districts. That report can be found [here](#).

POTENTIAL ISSUES:

- None identified

FISCAL IMPACT: Not yet determined

⁵ Zinth, Jennifer and Julie Woods. *Response to Information Request*. Education Commission of the States. (July 2, 2018). Available online at: https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Information-Request_Use-of-ACT-SAT-and-PSAT-for-High-School-Testing-as-Required-by-ESSA.pdf

⁶ Zinth, Jennifer. *Response to Information Request*. Education Commission of the States. (July 2, 2018). Available online at: https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Information-Request_Legislation-Offering-Free-SAT-Exams.pdf

⁷ Mullen, Jill and Julie Woods. *50-State Comparison: State Summative Assessments*. Education Commission of the States. (April 11, 2018). Available online at: <https://www.ecs.org/50-state-comparison-state-summative-assessments/>.

⁸ Roeber, Ed, John Olson and Barry Topol. *Feasibility of the Use of the ACT and SAT in Lieu of Florida Statewide Assessments. Volume 1: Final Report*. Assessment Solutions Group. Florida RFP 2018-48. (January 1, 2018). Available online at: <https://www.trbas.com/media/media/acrobat/2018-01/70109708365300-05065523.pdf>